

# The Washington Herald

# NEW PLAYS DOMINATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON IN WASHINGTON'S PLAYHOUSES

# **Concerning Critics** And Their Value To Theatergoers

Encouragement of Merit in Obscure Playwrights and Producers Is Real Field for Work.

By EARLE DORSEY.

OREMOST among the curses of a critic's existence is the cynical idea prevalent, even among his own friends and associates, that his private opinion of a specific play is frequently at odds with his published analysis thereof, and that the only true and

reliable method of getting at the truth is to button-hole the critic, drag him into a corner and with much eye-winking and chin-rubbing, demand a confidential report of the whole business. There is probably a good deal of retributive

justice in this popular belief but it is a belief, nevertheless, that takes a powerful hold of the popular imagination. It rather sets one apart to play the role of disbeliever, to scoff at the idea that criticism is ever sincere, to hold the critic up as a sly dog who writes with his tongue in his cheek and who nows just what he has to say, ere ever he enters

At times, this siege for confidential intelligence reaches the point where one considers posting a bulletin on the office door for the information of (riends but this plan is usually discarded. They ouldn't believe it.

There is a reason for such cynicism, of course Journalistic criticism never rises higher than the morality of newspaper management and not all of the journalistic tribe can claim kinship with the free peoples. There are signs, however, that clearly mark the trail of conscience in criticism-for criticism, like the Biblical tree, is known by its fruits. Freedom and conscience do not always travel hand in hand, of course, but if one would find the truth in criticism, look for the uncomproming fact rather than for the soft answer that turneth away wrath from the box office.

And, lest one think the burden light, consider the dilemma of the critic who finds himself forced to review the immature, preliminary or, worse yet, downright unworthy, playwriting efforts of a friend. Friendship, a genuine desire to help, a sincere wish to attract to the box office as many dollars as possible in friendship's name-all these must go up like thistledown in the scale against that fixed, irrevocable thing known as pride of craft.

The value of newspaper dramatic criticism is a

thing frequently over-rated and as often under-

M OST of the over-rating, of course, is done by fledgling stage producers, budding playwrights, veteran press agents and players, all and sunquall at and then yamp a cub reporter out of a year's growth at the mere mention of his job. Stars, playwrights and managers are not above small species of seduction and bribery at real personal loss and inconvenience, on the bare chance that a journalistic friendship may be made against some future need.

need.

Each and every one, naturally, is striving to lead an unscrupulous critic into greater disgressions from rectitude and the more righteous critic into an unnoticed and insignificant let-down from his own code, for which they will probably damn him, one to another, as a low fellow unworthy of trust and altogether vulnerable to the smile of the first cutie shown him.

code, for which they will probably damn him, one to another, as a low fellow unworthy of trust and altogether vulnerable to the smile of the first cutie shown him.

The pofessional element in the theater, of course, lays an absurd emphasis on criticism. This is due to the fact that publicity—commonly known as "a following"—is the very life of the actor's art and it has been known, naturally, to play some small part, this publicity, in the box office takings of plays and the salaries paid to members of the Actor's Equity Association. The same press agent who will wave off with an airy hand some gigantic and almost disastrous panning from a Nathan, a Woollcott or a Broun, will supplement his remarks concerning the unimportance of newspaper dramatic criticism by handing you several yards of clippings from the Morning Screech of Upper Yakima. Pa, where his show opened for a one-night stand on the road to Broadway.

All this concerns the over-rating of the commodity. What then, of the improper and often-times expensive tendency to under-rate the findings of the journalistic scouts? The discerning critic—the honest critic—puts the public first in criticism. The public and the dissemination to it of a fore-knowledge of this and that play is the prime consideration. Particularly, must the public first in criticism. The public and the dissemination to it of a fore-knowledge of the sast enough of the truth to assist him in forming an accurate opinion of the play in question, ere ever he leans forninst with the box office window.

In many cases, the quality of the cast, the name of the producer or the reputation of the playwright become determining factors in the choice of a play. One knows, for instance, that David Belasco will not turn out a shoddy or an unready play if it is humanly possible to prevent it. One knows, furthermore, that Flo Ziegfeld will have a musical performance of such and such a type, differing only in degree from other popular successes of the past. Men like Dillingham, Cohan, Frohman, Miller, Hopki

or type of duals, or constantly recurring in the other hand, there is constantly recurring in the theater a succession of plays by unknown or little known producers, authors and players to which the playgoer, no matter how experienced, has little or no key. Productions of this class frequently labor under the neglect that is bred of ignorance of their intrinsic value and ignorance of what their producers stand for. The public, as a rule, prefers to deal in nationally-advertised theatrical goods, be it ever so conventional and uninspired, to risking \$4 and war tax on a production that, at best, is only a gamble.

Here, of course, the real field of conscientious and valuable criticism begins. The critical faculty occasionally—even frequently—unearths a production to which it can direct attention as meriting not only patronage but remembrance in the future as the worth while opus of one man or a group of men. A case in point is the recent exposition of Vincent Lawrence's play, "The Ghost Between," a play by a writer totaily pinknown to this deponent prior to the opening, but a play which revealed, despite shortcomings as to interest and casting, certain glimpses of promise in a new writer which will result, among other things, in a trip to-Baltimore on my part this week to observe Lawrence's latest work, "Love and Learn."

Learn."

In dealing with the recognized class of productions, one deals, in the main, with mere degrees of excellence or the lack thereof. One may point out in the Ziegfeld "Follies" of 1921, say, their departure from or improvement on the Ziegfeld standards of previous years, though one's statements can, of previous years, though one's statements can, of necessity, carry no great weight since Ziegfeld's public is usually not greatly concerned with matters of, degree.

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In the case of a play like the Lawrence work, however, the critic reveals to a buying public something of unusual theater value. Should he, while dealing in this same obscure medium, return an adverse finding, no great harm is done to struggling production factors, since the very obscurity of the offering is its chief handicap and other handicaps do not become particularly momentous.

The Lawrence play, as an instance of its class, serves to make plain another fact of the same subject and that is the reaction or lack of reaction of the nable to such findings of fact as may be evolved by a critic. The Lawrence play, almost without exception, received the most flattering notices from Washington reviewers, and it is my memory that the producers even advertised those same findings, but for all that, the Lawrence work hardly exceeded the gross weekly takings of 'Heigh-Ho,' the musical tempest in a tea pot that had expired on the Garrick stage the week before.

The public, then, or at least the more discerning element of the same, should carefully select its journalistic criticism with a view, actually to ascertaining the quality of a production in which theatrical value may be found. Frequently one critic is as good as another, though in the long run, one vasually forms a sentimental attachment to the haunderings of some special one. Having made the election, one should attempt to profit by that selection and make one's theater investments the subject of at least as much gudy as one would a bargain in hosisry or necktion.



# Today's Amusements.

Garrick — "Righ Noon," by Catherine Chisholm Cushing. Belasco — William A. Brady presents "The Man Who Came

National - Raymond Hitchcoc Poll's - "Pagans," by Charles

Anthony. Keith's—Vaudeville. Strand — Vaudeville and pic Cosmos - Vandeville and ple-

Gayety—"The Golden Crook." Metropolitan — Viola Dana in "Cinderella's Twin." Rinito — Justine Johnstone in "Blackbirds."

Palace — "Fatty" Arbuckle in "The Life of the Party." Garden—"Hellotrope." Columbia—"The Jucklins,"
Knickerboeker—Viota Dana in Crandall's - Cecil B. DeMille's

## Helen Ware Returns To the Stage After Long Film Sojourn

Helen Ware, who is co-starring with Irene Fenwick, Joseph Schild-kraut and Alice Fischer, in "Pa-gans," has a versatility all her own. She has been seen in almost every type of comedy, drama, farce, or melodrama produced, and has played parts which required the use of almost every stage dialect in cap-

tivity.
Among the many different types Among the many different types of productions she has been starred in are "The Third Degree," "The Price," "The Deserters," "Trial Marriage," "The Escape," "The Revolt," "The Celebrated Case," "The Road to Yesterday" and "The Kreutzer Sonata," and she has played Lady Macbeth to the Macbeth of Walter

but as an extra girl with Maude Adams in "The Little Minister," and received the huge salary of \$7 per week. In "Pagans" Miss Ware is cast in a role written especially for her, and should attain one of the

pearance upon the speaking stage since she starred in the movies in such features as "The Price," "Cross Currents," "The Garden of Allah," "Secret Love," and "The Deep Pur-

ple."
Miss Ware's last appearance here
was with the all-star cast which
presented "Out There" for the Red
Cross when over \$1,000,000 was raised within three weeks.

# Palace Is Decorated.

Lawrence Beatus, manager of Loew's Palace Theater, super-vised the decoration throughout of that theater during the past week, in keeping with the Christmas and holiday spirit. The lobby and mezanine floors, as well as all other accessible portions of the auditorlum, have been gayly festooned with helly and evergreens and Christmas trees have been mounted on each side of the stage.

# At the Leader.

William Farnum is featured on the Leader program this week in a revivaal of Rex Beach's sensational story, "The Spoilera." A great cast is seen in support of the star, in-cluding Kathleen Williams, Bessie Eyton. Thomas Santchi, Wheeler Oakman and others. It is a story of Alaska and has one of the most thrilling fights ever screened as on of the many stirring climaxes.

# Ibanez's Tale for Metro.

"The Four Horsemen of the Apoc-alypse" will be released by Metro the first of the year. It was begun last January in the west coast studios, and is now being edited and titled. The total cost of the film will be more than \$1,000,000. June Mathis adapted Thaper's story to the screen, and the picture was di-rected by Rex Ingram.

### "Man Who Came Back" Proves Real Winner For William A. Brady

"The Man Who Came Back," Will-Brady's big success, established an enviable record for contempo rary theatrical runs while in Nev York. Beginning on September 2, 1916, this play by Jules Eckert Goodman ran for fifty-seven weeks, most of the time under the necessity of playing extra matinees on Thursdays, until, at the end of its run October 6, 1917, it had given 483 performances. Then it played eight months in Boston.

eight months in Boston.
At the beginning of the 1916 season there were three sure-fire successes in New York: "Turn to the Right," "The Thirteenth Chair" and "The Man Who Came Back." Right on through the summer they ran, and when the new plays began to come in. "The Thirteenth Chair" and "Turn to the Right" started off on the road, but "The Man Who Cam Back" stayed, even when Brady had to cancel engagements in Brooklyn and elsewhere because the Playhouse still continued to attract crowds who wanted to see the play.
When he finally decided that it
would leave on September 29, in
order to get the theater ready for Grace George in a repertoire sea-son, the week of September 17 proved to be even bigger than the ones before, and Brady's business instincts wouldn't allow him to let

# At the Arcade.

The infectious Yuletide spirit is strikingly reflected in the large number of dancers nightly throng-ing the floor of the Arcade. To-morrow, "Paul Jones" night; Tues-day, "Lucky Spot," with plenty of prizes; Wednesday, a novel "Doll Party," with many unique favors; Thursday, another Jolly "Paul Jones" in the spacious upper ball-room; on Friday a pretentious New Year Eve Carnival, with all kinds welcome "Mr. 1921."

# Jan Kubelik Concert.

Special Matinees.

Special Yuletide matinees will be siven at the Knickerbocker. Savor, at the National Theater, under the Knickerbocker has in previous years given daily holiday matinees, this is the third concert in the Artycars given daily holiday matinees, this is the first season in which the Savor, York and Apollo have unstantial saverage and the Rational Theater in everything continuous performances.

Jan Kubelik Concert.

Jan Concert Councert Intensing and the favor with those

Music at "Knick."

The special holiday week musical feature of the bill arranged for knickerbocker Theater will be supplied by Mr. Max Pugatsky, a brillian Fifth Concerto by Saint
It is told by a man who is known for his honesty that

# IN THE PICTURES

Top row, left to right-Paul Gordon i The Man Who Came Back," at the Belasco: Estelle Winwood, one of the catured players in "High Noon," new Catherine Chisholm Cushing play at the Garick; Raymond Hitchcock, the central figure of his fourth annual musical revue, "Hitchy-Koo, 1920."

Middle row, left to right-One of the Des Lys Trio, at the Cosmos this week; Miss Louise Homer, to be heard in re cital at Poli's soon: Jimmie Barry, one of the headlined funmakers at B. F Keith's this week; Ethel Norton, of "The Golden Crook" company, at the Gayety.

Lower oval-Irene Fenwick in "Pa gans," the new play at Poli's this week

# Music Comedy Plots Difficult to Screen,

dramas on the screen, tells of a few to fithe difficulties confronting the task of adapting this type of play to the silver sheet. Mr. Christie was the producer and director of "So Long Letty," which opens a week's engagement at the Strand tomorrow as the photodramatic traction of the confronting the said she shewed more natural talent said she shewed more natural talent seen in his experience, and it would not take long to make the acting public see and appreciate it. the play go, so he finally had to postpone its departure until October tomorrow as the photodramatic at-traction of the vaudeville and pic-"In adapting 'So Long Letty' t

is in retaining the snappiness or 'pep.' Many who witnessed such productions on the stage and liked productions on the stage and liked which features a 'cello solo, and will them, were usually disappointed in the screen version. This I feel-will reft's Oriental Fantasy, "Islamey," not be the case with 'So Long Letty,' and I believe that not only will those who saw it on the stage, of France, who, will be heard in the lind it as cleverly entertaining and brilliant Fifth Concert. will those who saw it on the sage, and it as cleverly entertaining and refreshing as they would wish, but it will also find favor with those who know nothing of the rich.

# Magnate Made Julia Famous as Actress While Still a Girl wearing exquisite undergarments of chiffon and lace, things never seen, but each a work of art, which a famous Parisienne, Mme. Rasimi, came all the way from Paris to de-

Did you ever hear of J. M. Hill. he theatrical manager?
Probably not.
The man who looms big on the

business side of the theatrical game in his age and generation seldom is remembered long, after he has crossed the "great divide." The actor of fame shares a better fate, but even he soon passes out of rec-ollection because of the perishable nature of his work. The maker of books and pictures, where his efforts warrant, continues to live in con-versation long after his mortal being has gone into eclipse.

Yet J. M. Hill not so many years ago was a much-talked-of man in the show business. It was he who found in Denman Thompson a well spring of untainted humor and sim-ple life, and placed him in the better theaters to show it .

One seldom expects or hears of a woman being an ardent enthusi-ast of sport, but Eva Sully, sou-brette with the Golden Crook Com-All this is brought to mind by the name of Julia Dean in the star cats announced to appear in Catherine Chisholm Cushing's new play. "High brette with the Golden Crook Com-pany at the Gayety, is not only a sport follower but an expert.

Trapshooting is rightly called 'the sport of kings and princes,' she said: "The degree of clean-cut competitive sportsmanship exhibited in this sport stands in a class by itself. We have all heard the say-Opines Al Christie

Noon." at the Shubert Garrick Theater this week. Little Julla Dean was one of Manager Hill's idols.
He made her a juvenile star before she had learned to pin her halr on ing, Show me a lover of a gun and a dog and I will show you a good fellow, and it applies equally to rapshooting.

"As a recreation it is one of the best, as naturally the tired business man cannot get out with a crowd of such friends as he finds

Symphony season, to be given in the New National Theater on Tuesday afternoon, January 4, at 4:30, Pierre the screen," says Mr. Christie, "I have endeavored to retain the musical comedy flavor which made it such a great success of the stage.

"The great difficulty in making a has long been one of the favorite orchestral works of this master. has long been one of the favorite orchestral works of this master. He will also present Lalo's bril-liant Overture to the "King of Ys,"

# Yuletide Programs Offer Drama With A Note of Melody

# Two New Plays on Calendar for Week-"Hitchy-Koo, 1920' Offers Music and Girls.

SOMEWHAT at variance with the merry and care-free spirit of the Yuletide, the Washington theater offers, for the holiday season, a program of three legitimate dramatic attractions, capped off and em-phasized by a fourth—a merry musical melange that will serve to diversify an otherwise solid dramatic

Of the three dramatic plays of the week, two are quite new and one is the work of an author quite as new. That play is "Pagans," the work of Charles Anthony, whose name has hitberto been associated more intimately with music than with drama. It will constitute the Poli attraction for the week, while the Garstitute the Poli attraction for the week, while the Garrick will continue the engagement of Catherine Chisholm Cushing's "High Noon," which began its run at the Garrick last night. The Belasco, on the other hand, reveals an old favorite, "The Man Who Came Back," a play of love and regeneration by Jules Eckert Goodman.

The one musical offering of the week is at the National- It is "Hitchy-Koo, 1920," Raymond Hitch-cock's fourth annual revue. The other stage divertisements of the week are to be found in the city's vaude-ville and burlesque theaters, all of which announce programs in keeping with the spirit of the season.

The detailed programs follow:

### "High Noon"-Garrick.

"High Noon," a new play by Catherine Chisholm Cushing, featuring Estelle Winwood, Orrin Johnson, Julia Dean, Kenneth Hill, Louise Huff, Charles Eaton, Olive Murray, Dorothy Lewis, Corliss Giles, Harry Gibbs and others, will be offered at the Garrick this The opening performance was held last night. "High Noon" is described as a positive play with "the teeth and stress of modern life in every turn and line and showing character development that none is so dull he cannot read nor so blind that he cannot follow the involving steps to the inexorable end."

Here's Prize Lyric

From Mitzi's Comedy

Billy," in which Mital is starring,

there are some clever lyrics, one

of the best being "Historic Hus-

notorious ladies. The chorus of

This dame whose name comes ringing down the years.

Yet her obelisk in Central Park is stand-

And her name in song and story still

A Gown Worth \$1,000

Nothing in the Life of

Society girls and their mammas

Koo 1920"-and there are twenty-

five of her-failed to register an ex-tra heart beat at the news, for these beauties every night wear clothes which cost at least twice

that sum—and wear them with the air of ones to the manner born. What is a \$560 wedding gown to the little girl from Kamchatka who each night trails the gleaming length of a \$1,000 cloth of gold robe

behind the footlights? And how can one of these chorus beauties thrill at the thought of hand-embroidered

French lingerie when she herself is

sign for her.

The society bride's furs may be expensive, but surely they will not compare in allure with the gorgeous

muffs, soft and sweet scented. striped and checked in black and white, behind which Miss Hitchy-Koo hides her piquant face. As for

shoes, she has nine pairs, some o

leather, some of satin, some of gor

geous brocade, all made to order, and averaging \$40 apiece. In fact, she is free to turn her attention to art, music and literature, for she

Is Expert at Sport

crowd of such friends as he finds in this game without being benefited. Furthermore, he cannot be successful at the traps without putting his mind on the game, as concentration of the mind is one of the fundamental principles of trapshooting.

apshooting.
"In doing this he is giving hi

brains a rest from the business worries of the past and strength-ening and clearing it for some fu-ture problems. It is also a fine physical exercise."

Of Trapshooting

has reached the sartorial limit.

**Gayety Soubrette** 

-and wear them with the

the verse about Cleopatra is as

follows:

## "Pagans"-Poli's.

"Pagans," a modern romantic play by Charles Anthony, comes to Poli's tonight for a week's engagement, with a cast of players that includes Irene Fenwick, Helen Ware, Joseph Shildkraut, Harold Vermilye, Frederic Burt, and David Glassford, "Pagans" is a story of the triangle, in which the three chief characters are a young artist, incapacitated as a result of the war; his wife, who lacks sympathetic understanding; and a third woman, who is his inspiration. Charles Anthony, the author, is well-known as a concert planist and a teacher at the Boston Conservatory of Music. Two other plays by the same author are to be produced soon, it is said

# "The Man Who Came Back"-Belasco.

"The Man Who Came Back," Jules Eckert Goodman's romantic drama of love and regeneration. man's romantic grams of love and regeneration, which has been a favorite for no less than two seasons, will be shown at the Belasco Theater for a week's engagement beginning tonight. The cast will be headed by Paul Gordon, who plays the role of the man who came back; and exceptional parts will be interpreted by Ada Gleason, Lillian Boothe, Irving Southard and others. The attraction will be seen at the Belasco throughout the week. These Chorus Girls were duly thrilled by the recent an-nouncement that the average 1920 exclusive bride's trousseau cost at least \$4,000. But little Miss "Hitchy

# "Hitchy-Koo, 1920"-National.

Hitchy-Koo, 1920," the fourth of Raymond Hitch cock's annual musical revues, starring Hitchcock himself; Julia Sanderson, musical comedy star; G. P. Huntley, eminent English comedian; Doyle and Dixon, the dancing duo, and the Mosconis, novelty dancers de luxe, will be seen at the National tonight for a week's engagement. Huntley is an excellent comedy foil of Hitchcock, and Jerome Kern has provided Miss Sanderson with several songs. The song hit of the show, "The Old Town," is Hitchcock's number. Doyle and Dixon and the Mosconis are said to revel in a number of novelty dance numbers.

# Vaudeville B. F. Keith's.

The program at B. F. Keith's, beginning tomorrow, will find Vernon Styles and the ever-popular Barrys sharing top-line honors, with a stellar program grouped about them that includes Hermine Shone and Company in "The New Moon:" Dave Kramer and Jack Boyle in blackface comedy; De Haven and Nice in "A Laughing Affair;" Lorin Baker and company in "Summertime;" Betty Washington; Mme. Jewell's Marikins; Samsted and Marion; Topics of the Day and the Kinograms.

# Vandeville-Cosmes.

"Hills' Society Circus," featuring dogs, ponies, nonkeys and an unridable mule, will be the children's number of the three big headline features at the Cosmos this week. Harry Bulger, in "The Taxi Bandit," and Una Clayton and Company in her playlet, "Collusion," are the extra added headliners. Other acts include the dainty Des Lys trio in songs and dances; Walter Kaufman, "The Twentieth Ceptury Souse;" Mack and Maybelle, and Hart and Clark in merriment specialties with music; Ethel Clayton in "The Sins of Rosanne," and Buster Keaton in "Con-

# Vaudeville-Strand.

A stellar vaudeville bill will be the Strand offering this week, beginning tomorrow. Billy Hart and his Circus Girls, in "Bits of Circus and Vaudeville." will be the headlined attraction. Arthur Deagon will offer "Gems from Musical Shows;" the Cliff Baily Due, eccentric funsters, will be seen; and others in the list are Hodge and Lowell in "Object, Matrimony;" Al Burton and Mary Shea in "A Revue of 1920," and the picturisation of the musical comedy hit. "So Long. Letty," with an exceptional cast of players including Grace D'Armond and Colleen Moore,

# "Golden Crook"-Gayety.

Jacobs and Jermon's "Golden Crook" Company, a glittering musical extravaganta, will be the burlesque attraction at the Gayety Theater throughout the cur-rent week, beginning this afternoon. The principals listed on the roster of the organization that comes to the Gayety as the holiday week attraction, are numerous and talented and the list includes, among thers, Jack Callahan, Robert Nugent, William Schule Ann Myers, Eva Sully, Marion Phillips and the Slatke Prolickers. A special performance has been arranged for the Gayety on New Year night.